DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 085 281 SO 006 456

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TITLE America in Perspective: Yesterday's Questions and Today's Students.
PUB DATE [72]
NOTE 28p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *American History; *Colonial History (United States); European History; *Inquiry Training; Learning Activities; Philosophy; Revolutionary War (United States); Secondary Education; Teaching Guides; Teaching Techniques; *United States History; Units of Study (Subject Fields)
IDENTIFIERS Belknap (Jeremy); Primary Sources

ABSTRACT

In 1780, a prize was established in France for the best answer to the question; "Was the discovery of America a blessing or a curse to mankind?" This question and its only response from an individual living in America, constitute the basis of a high school history class unit. The background of the question and the content are developed, stressing academic discussions about America in eighteenth-century Europe, especially in France. A short biography of Jeremy Belknap, the American Rrespondent, is presented, emphasizing his other writings. A classroom study guide describes how the essay may be used in the classroom by suggesting techniques for the study of its style, form, and content. The primary benefit of the question is seen as a stimulus for the student in considering America as a whole and in placing this larger idea of America in the context of mankind. Further reading materials are discussed. Belknap's answer and a form for recording the viewpoints of aboriginal Americans, African Negroes, European immigrants and those who remained in Europe, are reproduced. (KSM)

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AMERICA IN PERSPECTIVE: YESTERDAY'S QUESTIONS AND TODAY'S STUDENTS

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SO 006 456

TODAY'S STUDENTS

The question was simple. "Has the Discovery of America Been Useful or Hurtful to Mankind?" The answers, of course, have been complex, especially if one encompasses the two centuries during which this querry has agitated thoughtful minds. Today's students may find it helpful to tap the reservoir of reflection which has collected behind this simple question. Perhaps they might agree with a student at Forest View High School: "It made you face something that you are not asked to answer in any other course."

Like his classmates, Jim had not only considered the question but had read an important answer to it published in 1784 by a Boston clergyman. We will get to the answer, its author, and the occasion of its writing shortly, but first listen to some of Jim's classmates.[1]

"The essay helped me a great deal in thinking about the American dream," noted one. Another related how reading one person's considered answer provided a "complete view" which focused the class's discussion and helped it to decide which issues could profitably be linked together and which ones were important enough

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for extended consideration. "It is good to get away from the history book," added a third student. A classmate, however, complained about the advanced vocabulary and the difficult reading. He had to read the eighteenth-century essay three times before getting the idea! (Which, the teacher might have pointed out, is much faster than most of us can handle the twentieth-century prose on the income tax forms.) The concern about readability is, however, a central concern in using primary sources in any social studies classroom. It is a problem which each class will have to handle in its own way.

THE QUESTION

Now, back to the question. It has its specific origins in France. In 1780 the Abbé Raynal established a prize at the Academy of Lyon for the best answer to his querry, "Was the discovery of America a blessing or a curse to mankind? If it was a blessing, by what means are we to conserve and enhance its benefits? If it was a curse, by what means are we to repair the damage?"[2] Eight published essays were written in response to this contest and a similar one sponsored by another French academy. All of these essays were written in French and four concluded that the discovery of America was helpful while the other four concluded that it was a curse. Condorcet's famous essay on the influence of the American Revolution was the most notable among those that concluded that America was helpful.[3] A ninth essay, hitherto neglected,, is the one which the students at Forest View High School read. It

is, as far as I know, the only contribution to this discussion by an American. Apparently, the author never submitted it to the contest, but simply circulated it around Boston and later published it in a local magazine. By the way, no essay was considered sufficiently worthy to receive the prize for the contest. Perhaps the American would have won the prize of 1200 livres if he had sent it in.

The question also has a general background. It is part of an extended discussion about America in eighteenth-century Europe and especially in France. The Abbé Raynal, sponsor of the contest, contributed one of the most substantial works to this discussion, A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of Europeans in the Two Indies, first published in 1772 and available in perhaps 50 editions by 1800.[4] This long, discursive, encyclopedia rested on several contemporary ideas about the New World. The first was the Comte de Buffon's theory on the degeneracy of animals in the New World. He reasoned that due to a combination of circumstances animals brought from Europe to America invariably went into a state of physical decline. His notion found support among other scientists, including Peter Kalm, a Swedish botanist, and the Abbé Corneille de Pauw, who thought that America was a "wet" continent recently emerging from the flood. And, as everyone knew, a damp climate was most unhealthful. But there was more at stake than just animals. Montesquieu and other contemporary thinkers believed that there was a definate relationship

between climate and men's physical and mental state. If animals degenerated in the New World, how about men?[5]

To these ideas Raynal added his own theories on colonization. He regarded colonies as "contrary to nature" and looked upon the European settlements in America as a great misfortune. Perhaps it was just as well that France lost most of her American colonies in the Great War for Empire, 1754-1763. Indeed, as a Frenchman, Raynal had no trouble extending the American degeneracy thesis to the English settlements in America.

Then something happened. The Stamp Act, the Boston Tea Party, Lexington, Concord, and the Declaration of Independence turned around the French perception of America. No longer was it English America and a degenerate fragment of Europe, but now it was the United States of America, an ideal republic of religious, political, and economic liberty. By 1781 Raynal had completely changed his view of the United States. Now he paid tribute to his American friends, Benjamin Franklyn, John Adams and others by referring to their new nation as an example for Europe, "an asylum of liberty". and the "birthplace of enlightened civilization." It was at this point that he decided to sponsor his contest.

Anyone wishing to submit an essay to the Academy of Lyon could take one of three approaches, each one amply supported in the literature of the day. (1) Following Buffon, he could say that America was physically and therefore also culturally degenerate. (2) Or he could listen to the American rhetoric about the U.S. being

a spearhead in the drive to an enlightened and just social order. Or, (3) he could follow some other theorists and hold that America was a cancerous growth threatening the health of the mother continent. The focus in this approach might be on Spain rather than England for the usual explanation for Spain's rapid decline in power and prestige was the sapping of ~~the~~ her strength by an overseas empire.[6]

JEREMY BELKNAP

It is not difficult to guess which tack the American author took. Jeremy Belknap was a Congregational clergyman who is remembered today by his voluminous writings and because his viewpoint so well reflected his times. He was a child of both the Enlightenment and the American Revolution.

His life profile follows a straight pattern. He was born at Boston in 1744 when the colonies were involved in King George's War. He died in 1798, when John Adams was president of the United States and the Alien and Sedition Acts were being passed. His father was a leather dresser and furrier merchant which placed the Belknaps in the upper middle class. As such, ~~he attended~~ they sent Jeremy to Harvard where his thesis in 1765 was the negative response to a standard academic question, "Did Adam Have an Umbilical Cord?" Later, because he went on to pursue better questions in his writings, Harvard granted him an honorary doctorate in 1792 and placed him on its Board of Overseers.

After leaving Harvard, and its wisdom on Adam's naval, Jeremy

Belknap taught school, studied for the ministry, and for twenty years, from 1766 to 1786, was pastor of the church at Dover, New Hampshire, then on the pioneer fringe of civilization. Throughout these two decades, Belknap advocated the patriot cause with great vigor. After Lexington and Concord, when New Hampshire troops set off for Boston, he was appointed Chaplain of the Militia. He could not serve, however, for he was much overweight and never in robust health. After the Revolution, Belknap resigned his pulpit because of a local salary dispute and moved to Boston. One suspects that he wanted to be closer to the center of action.

From 1787 until his death in 1798, he was the pastor of Boston's Federal Street Church, which he developed into a center of public discussion. Indeed, the convention which ratified the Federal Constitution in Massachusetts was held in Belknap's church. As a leading figure in Boston intellectual circles, Belknap became associated with many literary and cultural projects. His chief monument is the Massachusetts Historical Society, which he proposed in 1790 and helped to found in 1794. It was the first historical society in America.

Today, however, those of us who are not members of the Massachusetts Historical Society remember Belknap primarily for his writings. Foremost among these is his celebrated History of New Hampshire, issued in three volumes in 1784, 1791, and 1792. It is still considered a model state history because it is built on an intimate knowledge of the state and a feeling for the place.

Full of local details, it is also informed by larger questions and general ideas. Indeed, Alexis de Tocqueville found it a most useful study in his consideration of the American character.[7] The wide scope of the History and the range of its interests are attested to by the modern reprint edition, which appears in a "Sources of Science" series because of the book's distinguished contributions to geography.[8] The underlying thesis of the History of New Hampshire is that one understands a society by noting how it has adapted to its historical situation and geographical environment.

Belknap also wrote The Foresters, a humorus allegory on the early settlement of America, and two volumes of American Biography, which became an early "standard work." Many of his sermons were printed, including a collection on the Life of Christ. In the same year, 1795, Belknap issued his Sacred Poetry, which became the most popular hymnal in New England for almost forty years. Among his other pamphlets is a noted 1792 oration in commemoration of the discovery of America by Columbus. And then there is our essay which appeared in the Boston Magazine of May, 1784.

CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE

How might this essay be used in the classroom? The first problem one must face is vocabulary. Unless the students are very advanced, some specific help in vocabulary is going to be necessary. Most of the difficult words in the following text are defined in the footnotes to aid teachers who might wish to photocopy the essay for student use. However, once this barrier has been hurdled, the

students can profitably view the essay as a whole. Their first task should be to extract the thesis. Maybe this can be done by asking for a one paragraph summary of the entire essay. Or, if time permits, perhaps a debate could be arranged on the central question. Note that both pro and con materials will be found in Belknap's answer.

The second major opportunity presented by the essay is an appreciation of its form. Perhaps, the class as a whole could work out the outline for the essay. Indeed, such an exercise would ~~be useful to~~ help students recognize the logical structure of an essay: introduction, major divisions, marshalling of the evidence, and conclusion. Again, the footnotes and the accompanying chart attempt to provide some guidelines to the organization of the essay.

Beyond this, the content of the article builds a useful understanding of the Enlightenment and America's image in 1784. Specific content questions might be in order here. How does Belknap's article reflect the major themes in early American history? What are his attitudes toward mercantilism, Roman Catholicism, native American Indians, slavery, and immigrants. What is the basis of his objection to the lumbering trade? This last question will help students grasp the agrarian myth: the supposed dependence of the American way and virtuous living on farming, regular work, and personal independence.

Perhaps, it would be useful to consider how the question was framed: What is the implied definition of discovery? Why did

Belknap change the "blessing or a curse" parallel to "useful or hurtful?" Is there any difference? Why is mankind the focus of the question?

Another approach would be to ~~focus~~ concentrate on the conclusion of the essay. How does it reflect the American "sense of mission?" What does the author conceive this mission to be? To provide a more contemporary focus, students will probably want to bring the answer up to date, perhaps even to contribute their own essay. Indeed, they might even want to use the categories Belknap has established. Beyond that, they will want to evaluate the quality of Belknap's answers and the way in which his organization has helped him to address the question. Some class time might be usefully spent on the mechanics of considering a question and composing an essay. Surely, this is one advantage of using ~~this type of~~ an essay as primary source material in the classroom.

The primary benefit, however, is the way in which the question forces the student to consider America as a whole and to place this larger idea of America in the context of mankind. By searching for the larger picture, it is a useful way to begin or to end a course in American History. Also, the question has an enduring quality. The answers will never be final, nor will the case ever be closed. The contest is still open. Thank you, Mr. Raynal. Thank you, Mr. Belknap.

FOR FURTHER READING

Students and teachers who wish to pursue these matters further will want to consult three excellent books. For general background, J.H. Elliott's The Old World and the New, 1492-1650 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971) is a brief survey of the impact of America on Europe which begins by noting Raynal's famous essay contest. Durand Echeverria picks up where Elliott leaves off in his Mirage in the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). Raynal is one of the central characters in this study. Henry Steele Commager and Elmo Giordanetti have conveniently gathered extracts from the writings of Buffon, de Pauw, Raynal, and their colleagues in Was America A Mistake? An Eighteenth-Century Controversy (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). Unfortunately, none of these works seems to be aware of Belknap's contribution to the discussion. For Jeremy Belknap, the only convenient source is the summary of his career in the Dictionary of American Biography.

In the periodical literature, Henry Steele Commager has summarized the content of his book in "Was America a Mistake?" Horizon, IX (Autumn, 1967), 30-33, 113-118. Joyce Appleby's "America As A Model For The Radical French Reformers of 1789," William and Mary Quarterly, XXVIII (April, 1971), 267-286, is a recent scholarly contribution to a voluminous literature.

On the idea of America, Howard Munford Jones, O Strange New World: American Culture in the Formative Years (New York:

Viking Press, 1964), is the outstanding work. G.D. Lillibridge has collected a wealth of material in his The American Image: Past and Present (Boston: Heath, 1968).

Has the Discovery of America Been Useful or Hurtful to Mankind?

...Nec sit terris
Ultima Thule.[9]
Seneca.

Q. Has the discovery of America been useful or hurtful to mankind?

In answering this question, mankind must be considered either in a general view, or as distinguished into several classes, viz.

The emigrants from Europe and their posterity, the inhabitants of the Old World, the Aboriginal Americans,[10] and the Negroes of Africa and the advantages or disadvantages, either COMMERCIAL, POLITICAL, OR MORAL, which have arisen to each class, must be definitely stated.[11]

To mankind in general, considered as subjects of their Creator, and observers of his works, it may be said, that the discovery of America has produced benefits of a philosophical kind. It has given them more sublime[12] apprehensions of the works of God, by leading them the better to understand the frame and balancing, of the terraqueous[13] globe, by opening to their view, many species of animals and vegetables with which they were before unacquainted, with the wise and bountiful provision, which the author of nature[14] has made for their preservation and defense. It has proved the source for many learned enquiries, in which the human understanding has been exercised and improved. It has also enriched the medical art with divers valuable acquisitions before unknown. In a word, the discovery of America has much enlarged the field of science, and there is yet ample scope for the sons of science to expatiate[15] in, and make new discoveries for ages to come.

But let us attend to the above mentioned distinctions.

The principal view of the European Emigrants, in coming to America, was to obtain COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGES, and they have in a great degree been successful. In South America, the Spaniards and Portuguese have found immense mines of gold, silver and diamonds, with which they have greatly enriched themselves. In the islands and on some parts of the Continent, the English, French and Dutch have raised great fortunes by the culture of sugars, indigo, coffee, etc. and by the exportation of these, and various other natural productions, with which these fertile regions abound.

On the Northern Continent the English Colonists have derived advantages from the furs and fisheries of those immense regions, as well as by the culture of corn, rice, tobacco, etc. the breeding of cattle, and the manufacture of iron.

It has been supposed that the trade in lumber has been greatly serviceable to the Northern Colonies, but excepting that which is cut and drawn in the winter: the lumber trade has been rather a damage, as the spring, which on account of the swelling of the rivers is the proper time for sawing boards, is also the time for inclosing and preparing the fields for seed, the benefit arising from which, far exceeds that from the exportation of lumber. Since 1775, it has been found by experience that the stopping of the lumber trade,[16] has driven the people to the cultivation of their lands, which has much improved their substance and rendered the necessaries of life more plenty. Wherever the lumber trade is followed to the exclusion of the husbandry,[17] the people are more dependent for their living, and more depraved[18] in their morals, than where husbandry is the principal employment.

The trade of America has been intimately connected with that of Europe. All the productions of America, have brought Commercial Advantages into the hands of the Europeans. The fisheries, the furs, the sugars, the tobacco, the indigo,[19] the corn of the new world, have filled the European markets; and the gold and silver drawn from the mines of America, have circulated through Europe, and rendered those precious metals more common and easy to be procured. In some instances perhaps, these treasures have been misapplied. Charles 5th, by the assistance of his American revenue, extinguished the last gleam of liberty in Castile. Burgundy fell under the weight of the same power, in the hands of Philip 2nd. The kingdom of Spain has been drained of inhabitants and its cultivation and manufactures greatly impaired, by means of its connection with America, but the other maritime nations[20] of Europe have enriched themselves thereby, America has been a market for every species of European manufacture or production, and, by the influence which the European governments have had over their American colonies, the advantages of this trade have been made to center in Europe, so that though the American planter has been growing rich by cultivating and exporting the productions of the New World, the European merchant, guarded by the laws of his country, has drawn that additional wealth into his own coffers, which the American might have accumulated, if his commerce had not been under such restrictions.[21]

By means of the American commerce and naval stores, the fleets of Europe have been immensely increased, and the naval species of defense has been so vastly improved as even to decide the superiority of nations.

The trade on the western side of America has not proved so extensively advantageous as on the eastern. One or two ships only passing annually, between the Asian islands and the new continent.

With respect to POLITICAL advantages or disadvantages---It must be acknowledged that the European emigrants carried the Laws, Customs, Manners and Prejudices of their native countries with them. The Spaniards translated Despotism[22] and the Inquisition[23] and both they and the French carried their Monastic Institutions into the new World, where Liberty and Population ought to have been the principal objects of their care. The English inhabitants of the Northern Continent, though subject to the charge of transporting their European prejudices have enjoyed more freedom by their early and effectual attention to the establishment of Schools and Seminaries. Literature has been diffused,[24] prejudices eradicated[25] and exploded; just ideas of Law, Liberty and Government established, and a watchful jealousy maintained over the encroachments[26] of arbitrary[27] power; and the attempts to enforce it have been nobly, perseveringly[28] and successfully repelled. They owe, however, much of their late success to the seasonable and well directed interposition[29] of the Arms of France.

The door of Liberty being opened, and the attempts to shut it defeated, it will be wide enough to receive all who for succeeding generations may seek an Asylum[30] on these Western shores. The best part of the American Terra Firma,[31] is yet not only uncultivated, but unappropriated.[32] If it should be granted in large tracts, to private persons it may of them be purchased at such easy rates as will invite emigrants from every part of Europe.

The transition from political to MORAL advantages is natural and easy...Literature and Liberty have a vast influence in forming men to rational religion[33] and good manners. This influence is felt in the North American States. The mistaken notions of intolerance are exploded. No persecuting sword is drawn against Heretics. No councils thunder their Anathemas.[34] No Inquisition searches Hell for torments. No in-equality of Sects and Parties is allowed, but the Government favors all equally whose principles and practice are not destructive of it. In this respect the descendants of the first Emigrants have improved on the principles of their emigration, and have established more fully, that Liberty which was the professed object of their search.

The Catholic[35] air of this climate has an influence even on foreigners. They imbibe[36] the generous spirit of the country and improve their native principle of philanthropy[37] perhaps, to a much greater degree, than if they had remained in Europe.[38]

But what effect have these political and moral advantages, or disadvantages, on the ABORIGINAL AMERICANS?

In the Kingdom of Peru, at the Spanish Invasion there was as fair an opening for the cultivation and improvement of the benovolent principles of religion as perhaps ever was offered. How easy would it have been by gentle insinuation[39] to have transferred the homage of the Peruvians from the sun to its author; and to have shown them that the reason and ground of their Philanthropy, needed only to be traced up to a higher source. But the sanguinary[40] terrors exhibited by their Conquerers have most effectually prejudiced them against their Religion.

Tyranny has in this instance proved an antidite to superstition.[41]

It was one part of the professed design of settling America, to endeavor the conversion of the natives, and it must not be forgot that some very zealous and well meant endeavours have been used, by men who had neither wealth nor power in view. But it is equally true that the numbers who have been converted from Paganism to the rational worship of the Deity, and a regular practice of morality is not by far equal to those, who have either retained their native superstitions or changed them for some more glittering and refined.[42] The Americans have more fancy than judgment, their ancient prejudices are fixed and inveterate;[43] and they are jealous of the attempts of strangers to remove them; nor are they void of penetration, for while they see diversities of opinions among those who call themselves Christians and some of the more zealous endeavoring to propagate[44] the peculiarities of their respective sects among them, they are ready to say, "Go, Christians, and agree among yourselves what Religion is, before you pretend to teach it to us."[45]

The NEGROES OF AFRICA have experienced the most fatal DISADVANTAGES by the discovery of America. Before that event, they either enjoyed domestic peace, or if taken captive in war, were sacrificed at once at the shrine of victorious despotism. But the AURI SACRA FAMES[46] has changed their fate; the wars which before rarely raged among them have been increased, and the desire of taking victims for Mammon[47] exceeds the horrid thirst of blood. They are destined to be transported to the American islands and linger out a wretched life in servitude. Islands! did I say?--Ah, the American continent, and that

part of it, where the love of Liberty has burned with a bright flame, is tinged with the horrid inconsistency of fighting for its own Liberty with one hand, and holding fast its slaves with the other![48]

How shall these disadvantages be remedied?[49]

Will the Europeans who have tasted the sweets of refined luxury and extensive commerce, forced out of the earth by the labour of the unhappy slaves, permit the restoration of them to their native country, or disallow the future transportation of them? Not so long as the love of gain is such a prevailing principle in the human mind. But has not the American Congress advanced a step in this desirable reformation? Is not the future importation of blacks, by their solemn act prohibited? Let us wait till time and experience shall prove this regulation as politic, as it is just.

Shall we liberate those who are already here? Justice would plead for the measure, but let justice be guided by wisdome and benevolence. The aged slave, who has exhausted his strength in the service of a master, has a natural claim on him, for a support during the remainder of his life; having never been used to provide for himself in his younger years, he is now too old to learn that art; having always been under the restraints of authority, he would scarcely know how to govern himself. Let these therefore experience the lenity[50] of a gradual release from their labours, but let the hand which has upheld them all along, not be allowed to withdraw its support from their infirm old age. Let the young and vigorous be indulged with the prospect of freedom, at a certain age, but let care be taken that this freedom does not plunge them into licentiousness.[51]

Let there be not only wages, but rewards for industry, and let the return to slavery be the sanction[52] of these laws, whose direct end is the preservation of their liberty, and their morals. By some indulgence[53] of their native inclinations, to mirth and festivity on proper occasions, their labours might be so sweetened, that they might never have reason to complain of their transportation from another country, and even in time their posterity, might lose the rememberance of it.

What shall be done to civilize and improve the morals of the SAVAGE AMERICANS?

If we are to judge from experience, a plan similar to that adopted by the Jesuits in Paraguay bids the fairest for success. Nothing can contribute more to this desirable event, than a persuasion in the minds of the Savages that those who attempt it have no sinister views but are solely intent on their benefit. This must not be endeavored by requiring an implicit deference to sublime and mysterious Dogmas,[54] but by a simple appeal to their understanding, and to the sense they have of their own happiness. For want of such a conduct much well meant zeal has been misplaced, and some charatible funds misapplied.

Next to the design of erecting them into an independent and civilized community, which these Fathers have proved to be practicable, perhaps the mode adopted by some French Missionaries deserves regard, viz.,[55] to conform to their manners and follow them in their peregrinations[56] through the wilderness with the benevolent intention of instilling principles of religion into their minds. The Savages are always pleased with the conformity of other people

to their language and customs, but this requires a peculiar[57] constitution both of body and mind.

A third method which has been attempted is the educating their children and fitting them for the work of teaching their countrymen. The attempts to introduce this method among the tribes on the Northern Continent, who have room to expatiate and connect themselves with distant nations, have not been found so successful as, on some small Islands near the coast where they are circumscribed[58] within nature's limits, and can be under the control of persons of a superior character. Civilization is such a perpetual[59] restraint on the native genius of the American, that he takes the first opportunity to throw it off and return to a savage life.

Of all the mthods of instructing them, that of a formal harrangue[60] with the assistance of an interpreter, is the most tedious[61] and undesirable. The Americans indeed are fond of speeches, but abstract truths delivered at second hand do not affect them much. A sense of decency (which they always observe in their councils) will induce them to listen with some degree of attention, but such discources, generally make but a light impressions. Whatever be the manner, the greatest care should be taken with regard to the matter of their instruction. No party notions, no dubious[62] or uncertain niceties, however sanctified by antiquity[63] or human authority; no European prejudices or subjection to European princes, states and prelates should ever be propagated among savages. The pure original principles of rational and real religion should be propounded to them and their interest shown in receiving them. Such historical facts as tend to

illustrate these principles and engage the attention of the mend to them, may at proper seasons be introduced, this will beget in them a regard to worthy characters, and a particular veneration[64] for the grandest and purest character that ever appeared in human form. Above all, care should be taken not to inculcate[65] a notion of the partiality of the Deity, towards any particular societies or nations of mankind, but his universal providence, and equal care, his invariable regard to virtue and disapprobation[66] of vice, will be found to be the best basis of religion and philanthropy.

How shall foreigne s cultivate the advantages arising from their commercial intercourse with America?

By the same means that a merchant would endeavor to gain the favor of his customers; not by keeping dogs to bark at and bitethem, but by using them with politeness, moderation, and equity;[67] by extending to American ships in their ports the same privileges with those of other nations; by not interrupting the Passage of the ocean, but levaing commerce free and unshackled, and destroying Monopolies.

Perhaps the trade between Acapulco and Manila might be improved, by admitting the North American merchants to the Fair of La Vera Cruz, to purchase Asiatic commodities, and introduce into Mexico the corn and fish of North America.[68]

Those European Powers who still have dominions in America, should learn from the fatal example of Britain that the silken rein is better than the iron rod to govern defiant territories. Mankind by transmigrating[69] into and peopling other Countries acquire ideas of Liberty and Independence and their own importance which homebred jealousy will

in vain endeavor to restrain, and the more and heavier restraints they impose, the more violent will be the struggle to regain that Liberty which is the gift of nature, especially if a sufficiencey[70] of riches and a thorough knowledge of the rights and interests of mankind are called to its aid.

Finally how shall the European Emigrant secure and perpetuate[71] the Advantages derived from his settlement in the New World. Let him breed his Son to a love of Knowledge and Virtue: Let him be taught the value and importance of preserving the first limits between native Liberty and delegated Authority. Let him learn to be governed by Rulers of his own choosing and approving and always to submit to the opinion and advice of the majority of his Brethern except in matters of Conscience; let him learn that to keep his sword ready furbished[72] and fit for war is the best method to preserve peace and keep enemies at a distance; let him learn to regard all mankind as Brethren, and to embrace a Turk, a Jew, or an Indian equally with a Christian...In fine let him learn that America is designed as the Assylum of Liberty, the Garden of Philanthropy, the Threatre of Virtue, the Temple of Science, and the Seat of Elysium.[73] If there is Enthusiasm in the Idea, it is such Enthusiasm as will impel to the exercise of benevolence[74] and contribute to make that in some degree real which is the object of its Wish...If it is a dream, Heaven grant that I may never awake from it.

Advantages/Disadvantages

GROUPS	COMMERCIAL	POLITICAL	MORAL
Aboriginal Americans			
Negroes from Africa			
Immigrants from Europe			
Those who stayed in Europe			

NOTES

1. The following essay was used in several schools in Illinois and Massachusetts in the fall of 1972. The results were reported by the teachers involved at the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies in Boston, November, 1972, in a session chaired by Professor William A. Peters, director of the Education Center at Saint Xavier College, Chicago. The teachers and schools involved were Mr. G. Galin Berrier, of Forest View High School, Arlington Heights, Illinois; Ms. Gail Bial, of Roosevelt Junior High School, Bellwood, Illinois; Mr. Ronald Kalicki, of Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, Wenham, Massachusetts; and Ms. Shirley Mantlo, of Fenger High School, Chicago.

2. The best discussion of the contest is found in Durand Echeverria, Mirage in the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), passim.

3. Condorcet's ~~The~~ essay has been translated and reprinted by Professor Echeverria, in the William and Mary Quarterly, XXV (January, 1968), 85-108. Robert R. Palmer also cites two Scandinavian essays answering the question, published in Copenhagen, 1785, and Upsala, 1802. The Age of the Democratic Revolution: The Challenge (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 258, n. 26.

4. It is difficult to find a convenient discussion of Raynal or his book in English. The best discussion I have found is in John Morley, Diderot and the Encyclopediasts, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1878). A briefer but more convenient source is the introduction to Was America A Mistake? edited by Henry Steele Commager and Elmo Giordanetti (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 12-16 and passim.

5. These theories are discussed, and interesting selections from the relevant writings are reprinted, in Was America A Mistake? , mentioned in the note above. Remember that Thomas Jefferson composed his Notes on the State of Virginia (1787) in rebuttal to these views.

6. See Echeverria, Mirage in the West, esp. p. 77.

7. "The reader of Belknap will find in his work more general ideas and more strength of thought than are to be met with in other American historians even to the present day." Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, edited by Phillips Bradley (New

York: Vintage, 1945), II, 367.

8. Edited with a new introduction by John Kirtland Wright (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970). The Sources of Science, 88.

9. "Nor shall Thule be the end of the world." Thule was the last island known to the ancient world, perhaps Iceland. The meaning is that there were lands beyond. The quotation is common in ancient authors, Vergil also uses it.

10. Aboriginal Americans--Indians, aboriginal means native.

11. Note the organization of the essay as indicated in this paragraph. You may want to keep score on the advantages and disadvantages as indicated on the chart.

12. sublime--majestic

13. terraqueous-consisting of both land and water

14. author of nature--an Enlightenment designation for God

15. expatiate in--enlarge upon

16. The export of lumber from America to England was disrupted by the American Revolution.

17. husbandry--farming

18. depraved--corrupt

19. indigo--a plant used for a purple dye

20. maritime nations--nations with navies

21. Note that this paragraph contains a basic criticism of the doctrine of mercantilism.

22. Despotism--rule by a tyrant

23. Inquisition--an agency of the church to search for and punish heretics

24. diffused--spread about

25. eradicated--torn out by the roots

26. encroachments--moving in

27. arbitrary--unreasonable. The reference is to England. The American Revolution was caused by England's attempts to

govern the colonies unreasonably.

28. perseveringly--refusing to give up

29. interposition--to come between. The reference is to the French help given to the Americans during the American Revolution.

30. Assylum--place of safety

31. Terra Firma--land, solid ground

32. unappropriated--not given to anyone

33. rational religion--religion based on reason or morality rather than specific theology

34. Anathemas--curses

35. Catholic--all inclusive. It does not refer to Roman Catholic.

36. imbibe--to take in

37. philanthropy--love of mankind, desire to help

38. Belknap seems to be implying that unlike commerce, men must come to America to gain any political benefit. Note that this was written before the French Revolution.

39. insinuation--hints or suggestions

40. sanguinary--bloody

41. This statement indicates Belknap's prejudice against Roman Catholicism. He is saying that the tyranny of the Spanish Conquistadores made it difficult for the Indians to accept Roman Catholicism.

42. "Some more glittering and refined"--Again the reference is to the "superstitions" of the Roman Catholics.

43. inveterate--firmly established

44. propagate--spread

45. This is a recurring theme in Belknap's sermons. He emphasized morality rather than theology in his preaching.

46. auri sacra fames--Another quotation form ancient authors, in this case Vergil. It means the accursed hunger for gold.

47. Mammon--the false god of wealth

48. In this exclamation, Belknap dramatically points to the burden of American history.

49. Note that this is a transitional paragraph. The author is moving to the second point of Raynal's question.

50. lenity--mildness

51. licentiousness--immorality

52. sanction--support

53. indulgence--giving into

54. Dogmas--beliefs, doctrines

55. viz.--namely, that is '

56. peregrinations--travels

57. peculiar--special

58. circumscribed--confined

59. perpetual--everlasting, permanent

60. harrangue--a long blustering speech

61. tedious--boring

62. dubious--doubtful

63. antiquity--old age, ancient times

64. veneration--worship

65. inculcate--teach

66. disapprobation--dislike

67. equity--fairness

68. Belknap is suggesting that Spain admit American traders into Mexico to purchase goods from the Orient. Manila, Acapulco, and Vera Cruz were all important commercial centers in the Spanish empire.

69. transmigrating--moving

70. a sufficiency of--enough

71. perpetuate--to continue. Note that Belknap is here proceeding to the third portion of Raynal's question. The entire para-

graph is an early statement of the American creed.

72. furbished--polished

73. Elysium--paradise, a place of complete happiness

74. benevolence--kindness